United Nations E/ICEF/2006/P/L.15

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
24 April 2006

Original: English

For action

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
Annual session 2006
5-9 June 2006
Item 11 of the provisional agenda*

Short-duration country programme document

Sri Lanka

Summary

The short-duration country programme document for Sri Lanka is presented to the Executive Board for discussion and approval. The Board is requested to approve the aggregate indicative budget of $0.8 million from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and $11 million in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the year 2007.

The situation of children and women

1. The ceasefire agreement signed between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2002 has brought a level of stability to the country. However, as of October 2005, a total of 339,224 of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) have not resettled. Recruitment of children into LTTE armed groups has continued. Reports of recruitment of 4,402 children since March 2002 are on UNICEF record, and a total of over 1,300 cases are yet to be resolved. Despite a continuously volatile situation, the absence of overt armed conflict has allowed the country to develop. Improvement in the overall development environment, however, was greatly disturbed by the tsunami, which caused more than 35,000 deaths. Nevertheless, Sri Lanka is set to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals.

2. Achievement of targets on poverty and malnutrition remain a serious

* E/ICEF/2006/10.

06-32599 (E) 050506

challenge. Basic indicators for Sri Lanka compare favourably with those of other developing countries. The infant mortality rate is 12.2 per 1,000 live births, under five mortality rate is 18.8 per 1,000 live births, and the maternal mortality ratio is estimated at 47 per 100,000 live births. Life expectancy is 71.7 years for males and 76.4 for females.

3. With the country's gross national income exceeding the threshold of $826 per capita, Sri Lanka is considered a lower-middle-income country. Yet, these figures obscure significant regional disparities and the fact that 22.7 per cent of the population is living below the official poverty line. An estimated 29.4 per cent of children are reported to be underweight, however, in selected deprived districts, average estimates are 37.4 per cent. The net primary enrolment rate is 96.4 per cent (with no significant gender-related differences). Again, there are vast disparities in education quality. According to Ministry of Education data, only 24 per cent of children in the conflict-affected North East achieve mastery level in their first language; the highest percentage, just over 50 per cent, is in the Western Province that houses the capital.

4. On average 82 per cent of the population, excluding the conflict-affected North Eastern Province, is estimated to have access to safe water, while in the most deprived province only 64 per cent has access. Similarly, even though an estimated 80 per cent of the population, on average, has access to safe sanitation, access is as low as 57 per cent in one district. Sri Lanka has a low HIV prevalence rate of less than 0.1 per cent; yet, given the social and economic risk factors, strengthening prevention interventions is paramount.

5. The current Government has shown its commitment to children by creating a new Ministry for Child Development and Women's Empowerment. The National Plan of Action for Children 2004-2008 continues to provide the framework for the Government's fund allocations. The overall challenge for 2007 will be to ensure that the sector for basic social services addresses disparity reduction and improves its efficiency and effectiveness.

The country programme, 2007

Summary budget table

(In thousands of United States dollars)

Programme	*Regular resources*	*Other resources*	*Total*
Learning years	130	1 700	1 830
Early childhood	330	2 000	2 330
Water, sanitation and hygiene	0	3 500	3 500
Child protection	130	2 500	2 630
Planning, policy analysis, monitoring, evaluation and communication	130	200	330
Cross-sectoral costs	80	1 100	1 180
Total*	**800**	**11 000**	**11 800**

* An additional $70 million is expected to be available for the tsunami emergency response programme in 2007.

Reasons for the short-duration programme

6. The harmonized joint United Nations country programme cycle for Sri Lanka was expected to commence in 2007. However, after the tsunami in late 2004 diverted attention from the achievement of development targets for 2005-2006, the agencies of the United Nations Development Group Executive Committee delayed the start of the next joint country programme cycle to 2008. Thus, a bridging programme in 2007 was needed in the framework of an extended United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

Goals, key results, strategies

7. The 2007 UNICEF country programme aims at improving the lives of children and women in Sri Lanka in the common effort of achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and *A World Fit for Children*, and within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Special emphasis will be given to enhancing the protection environment and infrastructure for children, reducing child malnutrition and neonatal mortality, improving the quality of education, making available preventive services for HIV/AIDS, and supporting conflict prevention and resettlement schemes for conflict-affected populations. A recent survey by UNHCR of IDP camps in conflict-affected districts has shown that availability of water and sanitation facilities is the most important factor in the decision of IDPs to resettle.

8. The country programme will align itself with the objectives of the National Plan of Action for Children 2004-2008, the Education Sector Development Framework (2006-2010) and the national Framework for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction, and provide full support to the development and implementation

of a national nutrition policy. The country programme will also contribute to the UNDAF outcomes related to poverty reduction, supporting good governance and peace-building. Key strategies are to reduce disparities in the basic social service sector through capacity-building in underserved districts and to support the United Nations joint transition strategy for conflict-affected areas. Communication for behaviour change will be an essential strategy across all programmes, as will preparedness and capacity for emergency response in line with the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies. A gender equitable and human rights-based approach to programming will be adopted, and conflict sensitivity will be addressed, with a special emphasis placed on social cohesion initiatives.

9. In 2007, the UNICEF-supported tsunami recovery programme will cover 10 affected districts with an estimated budget of $70 million. The country programme will focus on an additional 7 districts where disparities are most evident. Under-age recruitment and reintegration-related activities, including commitments under Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005) will be implemented in all conflict-affected districts.

Programme components

10. The programme components have been framed within the context of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan for 2006-2009. The key expected result of the **learning years programme** is an increased achievement of mastery level of key competencies by children in grade 4 in two areas: their first language, from 34 per cent to 44 per cent; and mathematics, from 33 per cent to 43 per cent. Key to achieving this result is to have in place school-based management plans, in line with the child-friendly school initiative, that define the individual needs of each school, and to link these plans to the overall resource allocation process of the Government. It is also crucial to strengthen the teacher-training system. A second expected programme result is the development of an action plan for ensuring that the estimated 5 per cent of children out of school resume their education. This programme will also focus on building the life skills of adolescents to avoid high-risk behaviours and will aim to ensure that at least 50 per cent of adolescents have correct information and relevant skills to reduce HIV risk behaviour.

11. The **early childhood programme** will aim to reduce malnutrition and neonatal mortality, achieving the following key results: (a) the proportion of pregnant women with obstetric complications who are treated in emergency obstetric care facilities increases to 75 per cent; (b) all facilities with emergency obstetric care services provide neonatal resuscitation and related emergency services; (c) the mean weight gain during pregnancy is increased by 1 kilogram of the baseline to be established; and (d) the growth faltering of children in the first two years of life is reduced by 15 per cent in selected areas of the 7 districts. The programme will also ensure that 100 per cent of women who test positive for HIV have access to comprehensive prevention of mother-to-child transmission "plus", and that 100 per cent of HIV-exposed infants have cotrimoxazole (an antibiotic) prophylaxis.

12. The **child protection programme** will aim to ensure that children are better protected from abuse, exploitation and neglect. It will contribute to these results: (a) key institutions providing care and protection for children are strengthened, and necessary legal frameworks are in place; (b) children and teachers in 300 schools have access to psychosocial materials and support services in conflict- affected

areas; (c) under-age recruitment is reduced to 0 cases, and all released children are reunited with their families and re-integrated into society; and (d) with the contribution of mine-risk education, the number of incidents related to mine and unexploded ordinance that occurred in 2006 is reduced by 15 per cent. The programme will also work towards comprehensive HIV prevention among the most vulnerable adolescents.

13. The **planning, policy analysis, monitoring, evaluation and communication programme** will ensure that the situation of children in Sri Lanka is considered by policy makers, legislators, donors, development stakeholders and the general public in policies and measures to reduce disparities and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public social service sector in reducing poverty and malnutrition. This programme will focus on advocating for the fulfilment of child rights across sectoral programmes and on empowering stakeholders with the information and skills to change behaviour.

14. The **water, sanitation and hygiene programme** is an addition to the previous country programme, which included a small-scale water and sanitation component in the early childhood programme. The tsunami emergency response has required a full-scale water, sanitation and hygiene section. With this capacity in place, UNICEF Sri Lanka is able to support the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene interventions in areas outside the tsunami-affected districts and to contribute to resettlement of IDPs. In 2007, 4,000 IDPs and host community families will have community-based safe water and sanitation facilities and improved hygiene practices. It is expected that technical solutions introduced will serve as pilot projects for other environmentally vulnerable coastal areas in the country.

Major partnerships

15. Key partnerships will be with the World Bank for education; the World Food Programme and the World Bank for tackling malnutrition; the World Health Organization for reducing neonatal mortality; the World Bank, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration for improving the lives of IDPs; the United Nations Population Fund and UNHCR on sexual and gender-based violence; the United Nations Development Programme, the International Labour Organization and UNHCR on the 4 "Rs" (repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction) approach; and Save the Children and other national and international non-governmental organizations, especially in child protection. Coordination on a strategic approach to HIV and AIDS in Sri Lanka is facilitated through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Theme Group. The development of the UNDAF in 2007 is expected to open new horizons for additional partnerships.

Monitoring and evaluation

16. Monitoring of the country programme will be carried out through a field monitoring and reporting mechanisms developed following the mid-term review (MTR) recommendations. The integrated monitoring and evaluation plan will ensure that the means of verification for key outcome/impact indicators are in place. Further institutionalization and development of *DevInfo*, including the emergency module, will receive appropriate support. The country programme 2007 is acting on the recommendations of the 2004 MTR in focusing on reducing malnutrition and improving the quality of education.